

Keeping Art in the Spotlight



Plan and present performances for your school and community that bring artists to life, such as these two students portraying Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera. Photo by Bill Yarborough.

Eldon Katter

Seen any good movies about art teachers lately? Probably not, unless you count Julia Roberts' role as an art history professor in *Mona Lisa Smile* or Cate Blanchett's victimized art teacher in *Notes on a Scandal*. There's also *Tormented*, a horror/comedy in which the artroom is the scene of a stabbing. However, we could name a few films or TV sitcoms that celebrate the performing arts: *Mr. Holland's Opus*, *Music of the Heart*, *Fame*, "Glee."

Let's face it, when it comes to putting the spotlight on art teachers or

art in the schools, Hollywood has chosen the dark side. So to call public attention to the role of art in education, it's up to you to show the bright side, even if it's only in your local community, where it counts the most. So here are a few ideas to help you to keep art in the spotlight:

- Develop a list of artists' birthdays, which could be noted with morning announcements.
- Invite parents and grandparents to assist you in setting up displays of student work in the school and community.

- Coordinate displays of artwork in the artroom, hallways, library, principal's office, and district administration offices.
- Sponsor art shows in banks, restaurants, hospitals, shopping malls, or community centers including work by students, parents, senior citizens, and artists.
- Organize interdisciplinary exhibits in the community, such as "literature and art" in the public library, "social studies and art" in the town hall, "math and art" in a local bank, or "music and art" in a performing arts center or music store.
- Plan an opening reception for school art exhibits. Ask for local newspaper coverage.
- Arrange with the local newspaper to feature student artwork on a regular basis.
- Invite artists as guest speakers for PTA meetings or district-wide in-service days.
- Plan a Sunday field trip to an art museum for parents and students. Charge for transportation and arrange with the museum for free admission or a special group rate.
- Facilitate an outdoor sketching session for community members. Ask high-school students to assist in organizing and providing instruction for this event.
- Schedule a special day in the school focusing on a famous artist. Exhibit reproductions and feature Power-Point or video presentations in the school cafeteria.
- Publish an annual calendar with student art and poetry.

If you have other advocacy projects that have helped you keep the spotlight on art in your community, *SchoolArts* would like to hear about them. And if you have a movie or TV episode about art in the schools to recommend, please let us know. ☺

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